



Testimony
Betsy Gara
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the
Planning & Development Committee
February 20, 2013

**RE: HB-6334 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE FEASIBILITY OF REGIONALIZING
EMERGENCY DISPATCH FUNCTIONS**

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) respectfully submits the following comments in **support of HB-6334**, which would create and fund a study to investigate the potential benefits of having municipalities cooperate on public safety functions

We understand that Connecticut must explore opportunities to consolidate emergency dispatch functions to improve the efficiency and delivery of services and reduce costs. COST has been concerned, however, about efforts to mandate consolidation without providing municipal officials with a meaningful opportunity to provide input on such consolidation and the impact on the public safety of the community.

Municipal officials should be partners in a state-*facilitated* process to encourage regionalizing emergency dispatch functions – rather than state-*mandated* process. Some towns may want to participate in consolidation programs but should not be forced to regionalize if they believe that it will undermine public safety or increase costs for their community. State officials should be prepared to demonstrate to towns how consolidation will impact the delivery of services to ensure that public safety will not be undermined and costs will not be increased.

A study of the potential benefits, as called for under HB-6334, would help address these issues

In addition, some towns have indicated that they face certain barriers to consolidation due to existing labor contracts or other factors. They have also pointed out that the funding model is flawed. We encourage these issues to be reviewed as part of the study.